

**Tourism Workforce Assessment Forum**  
**Phoenix**  
**May 19, 2005**

**Discussion Topic 1: Recruitment, Retention & Succession**

**What non-traditional strategies do you use to recruit entry-level employees?**

- Existing employees get money for referrals
- Most do traditional advertisement
- Internet plays a greater role. Jobbing, these sites are producing lots of applicants. Line workers are thru traditional
- We have our people doing our screening; they've gone through the process and seem to have a higher success rate
- We use extensively the memberships that our staff and managers interface with. We find a lot of success. I recruit through a program at New Mexico State University where I sit on a tourism association board
- We post at universities and colleges; we go through their career centers
- We have an intern program and bring students in and train and have a 60 percent hiring rate from this program

**What non-traditional strategies do you use to recruit management employees?**

- We promote from within. External positions go to entry-level
- We're at about 80% of internal promotions
- We have a huge succession program, 1/5 of our employees were promoted. So they are prepared
- We don't have that kind of depth in our place. If a manager leaves, we don't have a #2 person to take over, so we have to outsource that. So we'll call sister hotels or network thru other hotels to find people

**Besides wages, what factors contribute to employee turnover?**

- Bad managers and benefits
- Lack of career path
- From bowls (Fiesta, etc.), contacts change year after year and its new management
- Seasonality has something to do with it too
- People move...people graduate from college
- Transportation is an issue. If someone rides the bus it is hard if people move and get to work in just under 2 hours. We've talked about people's challenges and finding easily accessible transportation, but the money isn't there to meet the demand for buses
- We provide buses for students and this is a huge issue for people when they join the workforce
- Sometimes employees come in and they aren't trained to fill the role, so there are programs in the company to help them train
- Grooming issues? Were trying to emphasize to kids graduating, we're emphasizing that most of us don't have a degree in hospitality. We're going to do some career fairs this summer to give them insight into the industry

**What are you doing/could you do to attract young people to consider a career in the tourism industry?**

- I've had high schoolers come in and check out the hotels. They have a limited view of the hotels, so we talk to them about sales and marketing and other resources and other things they don't think about so they have a broad idea of what we are. Lots of the kids who came in were interested in marketing. I send my openings to high schools in the area and they are trying to get travel/tourism programs started. They called to ask if I would do it
- We do one with Hopi and Navajo reservation busing kids anywhere from 16 -18 in
- The ACHLA works with lots of high school kids, in September is the AZ High School Expo, we invite high school kids most have a food/beverage career in mind so visiting these booths to get more ideas in these careers
- There are lots of back-of-house professions that people aren't aware of, we get kids in and have them shown around and talked to about them... it's a targeted session so they see more of hotel professions. We get about 250 students to attend and they have to be enrolled in tourism classes
- It is broader awareness. The community needs to understand the industry. It's not just entry wages. We need to communicate that to the public. We need a tactical approach/campaign, it is news media relationships and getting stories out during national tourism events
- There's another root cause, there's a lot of kids that don't want to be in service, there needs to be a perception change with these kids. It's not a bad thing. It's an issue that needs to be changed

**How are you preparing employees for advancement in your organization?**

- Cross training is critical

- We do job shadowing so that everyone understands their department and other areas of the hotel.
- We have an employee extension program that ends up as a management trainee program
- Tuition reimbursement targeted toward hospitality industry. Its pretty broad—Spanish, math, we reimburse them with success rate (grade)
- Success stories within the companies you work in, you can start sharing those during orientation and even during recruiting, these are important.
- Our gm does that. He started scrubbing vegetables and worked his way through.
- We have a succession worksheet, a questionnaire to find out where people want to go and what their goal is and their strategy to get there. Manager meets with them to get them there. We have a communiqué that announces jobs available and keep people trained to get them to the next step. We let people define their career path.
- We have a formal and informal mentoring program. Formal is to take them to a specific position. The informal – because we don't have a formal program—we pair them up to learn about a position or a certain skill. Lots of career exploration opportunities

#### **Are there jobs that a guest worker program would be especially well-suited to fill?**

- We are steps outside of Guadalupe...
- The ability for people to speak English is critical. When we hire someone English needs to be spoken, especially because all positions are guest-related
- We have firemen and others that want to come in to work part time
- You could look at positions where there's a higher rate of Hispanic workers. It can be difficult to hire staff in these areas
- We start using guest workers, what do we say to people who are here legally. That's our quandary
- Do we have issues of labor? Are we having a tough time filling positions?

### **Discussion Topic 2: Industry Trends**

#### **How do changing travel preferences affect your workforce and training needs?**

- At parks, we are annually increasing RV travel and accommodations. Training and workforce is more employees dealing with the needs of RVs in technology and other related issues. Some people want internet access in their RVs
- I would ask that question... *How do changing travel preferences affect your workforce and training needs?*
- Our seasons change and a large number of groups come in Jan thru Apr, and then it slows down. People are changing their patterns of travel. We don't have many high times and low times
- We have to have people thinking about being flexible and escalating guest expectations
- There's a blur of business and pleasure. Our employees need to be able to entertain and walk thru computer issues and support resources in the area
- People expect free internet and other resources built in to the cost of the room
- We have a variety of guests in our hotel. We are educating our departments about small things like dealing with children, a leisure guest boot camp. Constant quizzes with our employees to make sure they know the community

#### **What other social trends (cultural, environmental, political, economic, demographic, etc.) do you anticipate impacting your industry?**

- We're the park and considered remote, we're not so remote anymore, so there's a trend of real estate affecting our business
- I was at a health care forum talking about nurses, but it's a terrible work environment. Is this the same thing going on in tourism? Is that a social situation that will affect our workforce? People's ideas of these jobs affect [their work choices]
- Lots of our employees just want to do that job and leave, so it's a matter of the job fitting the employee
- There's a dynamic in hotels with chains, what's happening is that chain 1 does this, everyone else follows, so there's constant change and people are demanding more for less. This is a vicious cycle, how do we get out of this?
- We supply hotels; some dynamics that have changed is the nature of the job. More physical work, the workforce dynamic is changing; people don't educate their children on the realities of this work environment
- Trying to foresee guest expectations and how this affects the jobs and this is a heavy load on employees

#### **What new jobs are emerging in your company or industry?**

- IT. Are there any new positions that are gap fillers, a troubleshooting position?
- We have a wedding shadow, we also do shadow meeting planner. It is that interim service giver

- We just contracted with an outside company and employees just call this company
- As a training provider, the concern we would have is the seasonality of the industry. We offer one-stop career centers for individuals to come and talk to people about career opportunities and lattices so people can see the value in the job they'll go for the job
- Restaurants are evolving as we can. Customers want to talk to people. If it can make us more efficient, great. But it won't replace the person.

**Over the next five years, what jobs and job skills areas are being phased out from your company or industry?**

- Call centers are eliminating jobs at individual properties, for example, reservationists. There are central call locations outside of Arizona that is a trend that will continue
- Booking online will eliminate too
- Sales managers' jobs are also changing. You can invest 100K in a website and get rid of 2 sales people and still break even or come out ahead
- A great deal of our job descriptions is to include computer skills
- What would take all night for 2 auditors to complete, so they become more of a desk clerk. It almost works itself.

**What impact will aging of workforce have on staffing in your industry?**

- We have a lot of physical work, the kegs... and the managers are the older people and I don't see that changing
- Younger people do not know about paying dues. We lose a lot of employees as a result. It will be interesting to watch this whole social security issue. Will the older workforce be able to come in to our industry? Will they be able to afford that position? Will they continue to come to our industry?
- We find a lot of older people who want something to do
- Ten years from now, can I keep up with the young people in our business? I'll still be marketable but will I be able to work without those skills? How can we ensure their skills kept up?
- There's a lot of pressure on HR to bring in to orientation and training for older employees
- Bringing in training has helped productivity and it was a small investment considering
- Regardless of political stance, guest worker program will play a role, especially as we lose older workers

**What intergenerational issues affect your workforce?**

- Today's workforce, there's a lack of trust and belief. That loyalty grows once people are there, but it contributes to turnover
- As long as they are having fun, people continue to work for us. We see a change in management and we lose workers cause of it. People want to enjoy their work, it is huge
- It doesn't affect the profile of our staff. I don't think that's a problem. 60 today doesn't mean the same thing and with people being older and active and productive, I don't see it as an issue.
- We do have folks who want to stay in the industry but people want more money. People have huge expectations with salaries, but that money doesn't come until people hit higher levels in this industry.

## **Discussion Topic 3: Staff Development & Training**

**What are you currently doing to train and update the skills of your employees?**

- Pointe South Mountain, we have the resources to do this. We require people to take courses to do personal development and expand the mind and Arizona history classes and management topics. 16 hours for all managers (4-12 classes). This is considered just-in-time training. We also have an extensive training program for all departments. There's room for improvement but our general manager is on top of this
- We do similar things with Anheiser Busch, from drivers on up they are required to take certain classes. Our employer gives us the tools to do this. Every employee is allowed to learn more skills by taking other classes and seeing what others do in their job. We have a huge training partner
- We do the same thing for technical skills and such. But our rangers are part of different organizations, so we encourage them to attend these events to learn new skills, programs but also to benchmark the industry and help us adapt to changes taking place

**What educational partnerships does your organization currently have, and how could these be improved?**

- We're partnered with a group that better yourself through education, 21 courses to managers, but we'd like to pass it on to hourly employees to deal with diversity, legal issues, different environments, so it is in progress

- I've been working with Western College and it has gone to other groups so it is helpful for us in the industry to work with these groups as they develop curriculum
- The idea of better educating teachers of the industry so they are better prepared to teach about our industry.
- Guidance counselors seem to be out of touch of this industry. There are so many opportunities out there and it could have a big affect on this
- There were people at a recent event where people broke the career down to problem solving. Kids were fascinated by the opportunities in this industry, we just need to engage them the right way

**What needs do you or your customers have that you are unable to meet because your employees don't have the necessary skills?**

- Language, there are times when we have teams come in and they have immediate needs and they can't service the people. It is not a huge issue, but it is a big deal. Need to educate on own services and community in general
- The labor pool is transplants, from other cities, so they are not very familiar with what's around. So they are not informed
- What becomes of new hire process? We cannot assume people have lived here for a long time or that they are familiar with the city. That's a huge social change, so many people moving here. We could work with AOT to build a resource for all tourism industry people
- It is such a bonus to hire bilinguals

**What can be done to help prepare younger members of the workforce to appropriately service the needs of your customers?**

- The expectations of our guests are more global, the GC, Scottsdale, not just Tempe or wherever. We have to have people that are technically sound and can get information. People will continue to ask for more and more so they need to be prepared for this.
- Customer service class—if you can handle this, you can do anything.
- Respect
- We do an outside survey and we ask if they are satisfied with customer service
- Writing skills. I cannot believe that people can't spell or put sentences together
- We've done very basic finance courses. Lots of people don't know what financial sheets are and so we're training
- Our most popular way to recruit, students come in at every age... we need an alliance in the hospitality industry
- Reviewing some of the curriculum, there's something missing. In these programs, people review specific areas, but they don't know how to put it all together
- Curriculum needs to change as industry changes. The best way to do that is to involve industry leaders in the content development of these programs

**What can be done to help aging members of the workforce to appropriately service the needs of your customers?**

- Prozac
- Computer training is important and a great benefit. Once they get beyond the fear, they do well
- Mentoring, we like to use them mentor younger employees because we have different social attributes and skills. These older workers can relay some values. People who've been with us for a while, they are valuable for the mentoring
- I think that with the generation gaps the more inclusion the more people can grow within the company. It can be self-feeding
- With older generation, we have to understand that they don't have the same goal and drive as they did before or as our younger people. They come to us from other careers and other places. We have to acknowledge that they have other needs and requirements, they want to work and not be flexible, they want to do the job and go home. We need to be able to meet their needs by understanding them
- We have older workers reporting to younger workers. Older workers expect a certain amount of respect just for their age, but we need to communicate that with our workers

**How will technology affect your staff training and development?**

- Wont do anymore compliance training online, drug and alcohol...etc. Distance learning is as effective as in person
- Most of our training is all online
- Most of ours is face to face. It can't be done in front of a computer
- Anything that knowledge based is ok to do it online. If you're trying to teach a behavioral skill, you communicating the knowledge without the action so it is harder to convey that skill training. Role playing, things like that are essential and not replaceable right now. Self-directed learning and have people do activities and go out and do something can be quite valuable for our employees
- The aforementioned is the same for restaurant industry

## **End Comments**

- We didn't talk about women in business or different ethnic groups. This is a growing phenomenon
- We have a problem getting Hispanics interested in our leadership positions. We can't get them, it is hard
- It may be cultural; we have a program where you can nominate any employee. We were getting very few nominations from housekeeping to find out what was going on, but we found out culturally elevating one over the other
- Hispanic women don't want to go above husbands...
- I would like to transplant issue affects us a lot and will affect the labor pool. The population boom is going to affect this too.
- We talked about resources, but we weren't mentioned... we have money out there to help with training.